

Children's literature by Ivan Blažević*

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Abstract: The text delves into various aspects of the literary work of Priest Ivan Blažević (Frankenau, 1888 – Szombathely, 1946), who authored texts for both adults and children, earning him the title of the "first poet for school youth" in literary history (Benčić, 1995, p. 265). Within the context of Germanic, Hungarian, Slovak, and Czech culture, a literary tradition emerged among a branch of the Croatian people who settled in their new homeland, primarily in the western part of Hungary, starting in the 16th century. Cultural activity thrived in the early 20th century, with a strong emphasis on the Croatian language and culture as integral markers of identity; these were perceived essential in shaping values within the family and school environment, with a particular focus on children as the primary audience. In addition to his contributions to children's poetry, Blažević's literary interests extended to children's prose and translations. Notably, he produced an intriguing translation of Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince" into the Burgenland Croatian language, a facet not previously acknowledged in Croatian literary history. By examining his literary work, the paper provides insight into the socio-educational context of the time and place, and the messages that were deemed important enough to convey and accentuated by the cultural progenitors of the time.

Keywords: Ivan Blažević, children's poetry, diaspora, Burgenland-Croatian, Little Church and School Newspapers.

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1. The poetry of Ivan Blažević¹

Ivan Blažević² entered the literary world with publications during the First World War (cf. Benčić, 2000, p. 21), and his notable publication is the short story *Fratrovac* in the *Kalendar sv. Familije* (Calendar of the Holy Family) in 1914, during his time as a young priest (cf. Benčić, 1996, p. 267). It is emphasized that thematically, echoes of the first poet of contemporary Croatian-German poetry, Mate Meršić Miloradić, can be recognized because Blažević (born in Frankenau, Austria, 1888) explores themes that we also find in the works of his predecessor: childhood, animalistic themes, religious subjects, church holidays, the Great War and its consequences, folk customs (*Mesopust, Zaručnici*), patriotic themes portraying the courageous Croatian people in all their trials (such as "Takozvani Hrvat" and others), as well as occasional topics and themes related to the social life of the Croatian people in Burgenland, emigration (*Amerikancem*), political changes in that area, especially after the First World War (cf. Bacalja, 2019, p. 193). Blažević heard many war-related themes from wounded soldiers because he served as a military chaplain in Vienna at a military hospital (Garnisonspital I) (cf. Benčić, 2010, p. 20), where he experienced the tragic destinies of wounded and fallen soldiers of the First World War. This can be felt in many of his poems, such as *Majki iz katanske bolnice* (To the Mothers from the Field Hospital), *Iz bolnice ranjenih* (From the Hospital of the Wounded), *Stari Poljak* (The Old Pole), *Kade ja živim* (Where I Live), and especially the dimen-

¹ The first chapter of this paper is in great part the translated text of the section *Pogledi i interpretacije gradišćansko-hrvatske književnosti 20. i 21. stoljeća* (Views and Interpretations of the Burgenland-Croatian Literature of the 20th and 21st Century), written by Robert Bacalja, in the book *Hrvatska rič gradišćanskih Hrvatov, Gradišćansko-hrvatski govori, 1. svezak* (The Croatian Language of the Burgenland Croats, Burgenland-Croatian dialects, Volume 1), Eisenstadt/Željezno, Croatian Cultural and Documentation Center, 2019, pp. 177–327. It is republished with the permission of the Croatian Cultural and Documentation Center in Eisenstadt.

² Benčić emphasizes that after his ordination, he served as a chaplain in the Hungarian town of Gyömoreu until the First World War when he was transferred as a military chaplain to Vienna, at Garnisonspital I., where he remained until the end of the war. For a short period, he became a chaplain again in the Hungarian village of Beled (1918), and in early 1919, he was transferred to a Croatian village in Hungary, Kópháza, as a chaplain. There, he published the devotional epic poem *Koljnofska Marija* (Maria of Kópháza). He worked in Koljnof until 1924 when he took over the Croatian parish of Hrvatski Jandrof, not far from Požon, which at that time still belonged to Hungary. He served there until 1935 when he returned to the Maria's sanctuary in Kópháza, where he remained until his tragic death in 1946. He met his tragic fate there during the war when he was beaten so severely by Russian soldiers that he passed away on March 29, 1946, in a hospital in Sambotel after a long period of illness. (Benčić, 2010, pp. 20–21)

sion of the Great War is evident in the poems *Pismo* (Letter) and *Pismo iz ropstva* (Letter from Captivity), *Zgubljeni* (The Lost Ones), and *Honvid Hari na raportu* (Honvid Hari on Report), where he covers the full breadth of the war, from fighting on the Soča Front to the Carpathians and his experience in Russian captivity. Blažević's war lyrics, compared to the war themes of Mate Meršić, have more of a documentary significance, unlike the philosophically more relevant verses of Miloradić. In the poem *Pismo iz ropstva* (Letters From Slavery), the documentary value is further enhanced by the dates of the letters, as the first one is dated Siberia, December 31, 1917, and the second "From Brother" (Siberia, January 1918): "Now we always have wind here./ The snow is high, as much as a meter."³ (Blažević, 1998, p. 233). One of the most poignant poems where Blažević's anti-war stance is evident is *Honvid Hari na raportu*, where he emphasizes the memory of a fallen soldier who fought in Serbia and had his leg amputated. He gives his final report before death because tomorrow he will stand before God. Here, Blažević portrays the full weight of the sacrifice of the Croat from Pulje who was not decorated for his sacrifice (there is nothing on his chest), but he leaves behind a wife and six children. On this difficult journey towards death and heaven, he is accompanied by other victims: "Strong and young, gray and old,/ Infantrymen, riflemen./ (...) One is a lieutenant, unlike many,/ You see the mighty and the poor./ Some are amazed, some joking,/ One is tall, another small,/ One is a corporal, the other a hussar,/ But look! Our Hari is the last." (Blažević, 1998:240) And in that line, Hari is the last one waiting on the way to heaven, just as he passed through life, which was not favourable to him. But in the end, Blažević believes in God's justice for he is welcomed into heaven as the first: "Then Saint Peter opens the gate,/ First Miho the commander:/ 'Oh, corporal, oh hussar,/ Young and strong, weak and old!/ The glory of the land, the bells and fairs,/ Today the first: Honvid Hari. '" (Blažević, 1998, p. 241)

Blažević also wrote a series of occasional poems dedicated to Croatian poets and intellectuals in Burgenland, and he dedicated several poems to his predecessor, Mate Miloradić: "Mojim prijateljem" (To My Friend), "Zadnji pjesnik" (The Last Poet), "Naša zlatna masa" (Our Golden Mass), "Mati Miloradiću na sedamdesetljetnicu" (To Mate Miloradić on His Seventieth Anniversary), "Dika Frankanave" (The Pride of Frankenau), "Spomenik Miloradića"

³ Note that the cited texts are originally written in the Burgenland-Croatian dialect, and that the quotes used in this paper are primarily our translations of the texts (rather than the official ones published elsewhere).

(Monument to Miloradić).⁴ He also wrote occasion-specific poems for other notable Croatians in Burgenland, whether to celebrate anniversaries or in the event of their death: "Ante Grubić," "Ivan Mušković," "Tomi Bedenik," "Jandri Kuzmić," "Jandri Prikosović," "Na srebrnu mašu Mati Karallu" (To Mate Karall on his Silver Jubilee), "Giječki knez," "Martin Borenić," "Ignac Horvat." We can say that he expressed himself in the occasional poems dedicated to leading Croatian intellectuals and writers in Burgenland. In the first place, these are poems of gratitude for their work and their contribution to the Croatian identity, such as the one addressed to Martin Borenić: "Radiant sun, clear mind,/ Bring forth our beautiful Hymnal./ (...) / God strengthen you, God reward you,/ Grateful are we, the Croats." (Blažević, 1998, p. 264) or praises for the public activities of his contemporary, Ignac Horvat: "To the family you shout: Be a faithful Croat!/ With fervor, you ignite our cold hearts,/ So that the Croat, like other nations,/ Now represents his rights...! / We have heard you! Great and small!/ Oh, if only we could follow your example!/ To be true brothers in being Horvat./ Oh, if only your ardor could inflame us!/ So that each one would love and understand his own!/ Croats would never perish." (Blažević, 1998, p. 265) In the occasional poems, he also touched upon significant anniversaries commemorating the victory of Christians over the Turks, such as "Kiseg 1532–1932" and "Frater Gabor" (On the 250th anniversary of the liberation of the city of Buda from the Turks). This series of poems continues his patriotic singing in texts like *Takozvani Hrvat* (The So-Called Croat), *Kad se narod iz sna budi* (When the Nation Awakens from Its Sleep), and others, in which he analyzes the situation in which the Croatian people in western Hungary found themselves after the Great War and major historical changes.

2. Blažević as a children-oriented poet⁵

When it comes to children's poetry in Burgenland, it is necessary to highlight *Male Crikvene i Školske Novine* (Little Church and School Newspapers),

⁴ Among the commemorative poems dedicated to Miloradić, the most successful one is the poem on his seventieth anniversary (Mati Miloradiću na sedamdesetljetnicu), where Blažević uses Miloradić's well-known phrase from the introductory poem (when he embarked on life with the Calendar of the Holy Family) and highlights the results of Meršić's work: "God under the Croatian band (...) / Never anything more beautiful or dear / Like after a long time, one's own." (Blažević, 1998, p. 251)

⁵ This chapter is part of the book *Zlata riba* (The Golden Fish), an anthology written by Robert Bacalja and Nikola Benčić. It specifically refers to the Foreword of *Zlata riba* written by Robert Bacalja (pp. 213–250).

which appeared in 1931 in Pajngrt.⁶ The majority of contributions are of a religious nature, but there are also educational texts and poetry. Considering the numerous contributions of children's poetry, we can emphasize the thought of Ana Batinić, who refers to the appearance of the first Croatian magazine for children and youth, *Bosiljak* (1864), as "pioneering (...) for several reasons: it was the first attempt to shape the reading material for children and youth and present it regularly, and the magazine played a key role in creating an atmosphere for accepting the new medium of 'entertainment and instruction'" (Batinić, 2013, p. 32). This is precisely the significance of the appearance of *Male Crikvene i Školske Novine* in 1931 in Burgenland, as they remained with their young readers for a full nine years, regularly bringing many interesting and instructive articles, particularly in their permanent sections such as *Crikvena povest* (Church Story) and *Školski del* (School Part), which educated generations of schoolchildren in Burgenland in a Catholic spirit and provided them with many examples from life and school in the educational context (cf. Bacalja, 2021, p. 225). One of the leading poets who contributed to the poetry program is Ivan Blažević, who appeared in every issue and published the majority of his work in them. It is also worth mentioning Slavko Marhold, who edited the *Školski del* section, and Dometar Lemperg.

Blažević published a part of one of his most imaginative poems, "Aca čemernjača i Šime dobro sime" (Aca the Unfortunate and Šime the Good Seed), in *Male Crikvene i Školske Novine*. In issue 19, on pages 6 and 7 for the year 1935, he published the first installment, titled "V. Mišić, VI. Big, and VII. Krokodil," and in issue 20, on page 6, he published the concluding part, titled "VIII. Na otoku and IX. Doma" (Blažević, 1998, p. 19). This series of connected poems (nine in total) presents a dream that a mischievous girl named Aca had. In her dream, she meets a boy named Šime, and they embark on a journey where they are undeterred even by the first chase, in which they are pursued by someone's dog. They decide to venture (Med negare) into the dark world of Africa, which attracts them with its freedom: "No school over there.../ We see elephants and tigers,/ Black people, naked" (Blažević, 1998:19). They are also drawn to the wealth they have heard about, such as ivory and diamonds, so they board a boat and sail

⁶ In the first issue, it is emphasized that the "Owner, Publisher, and Publishing House: Croatian Cultural Society in Burgenland (Martin Mersich Jr., parishioner in Pajngrt). Editor-in-Chief: Karl Stekly, Vienna, XV., Kriemhildplatz 3. – Printed by Hans Helbling, Karl Stekly, Vienna, XV., Kriemhildplatz 3." (1931: no. 1, p. 8.).

down the Danube towards the sea. Here we learn that they are children from Jandrof: "They were from Jandrof.../ That's why they know how to row well,/ They reached the sea./ And at sea, the wind blows,/ In Africa, they are now..." (Blažević, 1998, p. 20). In Africa, their dream becomes complicated when they are captured by "negari" (the black locals) and tied to poles where their children observe them. Blažević uses a clever comparison, as to the black children, they appear white: "The saw pale children/ As pale as the tree birch" (Blažević, 1998, p. 21). Following a familiar ritual from stories, the locals intend to eat them: "The fire burns, knives are being sharpened/ And the tam-tam beats louder.../ Already today, they wat to skin them!" (Blažević, same). It is only then that they feel a sense of guilt for their disobedience and recall what their teacher told them: "Our teacher wanted to say / A miracle in school: / The closest is God in need; / Aca prays to God!" (Blažević, 1998, p. 22). But the little white mouse, which brings them luck and whom Aca loves more than school, comes to their aid. In this scene, Blažević anthropomorphizes her pet, who helps her in the dream of her "catharsis": "I came to your aid," / says the little mouse. / "We'd better run away now, / so they don't devour us." (Blažević, 1998, p. 23). It becomes even more humorous when the mouse asks something of her: "In vain the fire burns here, / and knives are being sharpened. / Will you be good? Speak now, / and may God help us!" to which Aca humbly replies "I will never do wrong,/ I will obey the rules./I will listen to my mother, God,/ Uncle, kinsman, aunt.../ Aca is quiet: the little mouse/Is already nibbling on the rope.../ Tonight they would have gnawed it,/ The hated black men./ And I will gladly go/ To school every day./ Let them free us now,/ So we can avoid slaughter..." (Blažević, 1998, pp. 23–24). When the locals realize that they have escaped, they begin to chase after the fugitives: "The negros are running with knives in hands,/ chasing them like arrows./ It won't be good for them;/ For we shall eat them whites" (Blažević, 1998, p. 25). They are saved from this terrifying pursuit by a crocodile that leads them to a deserted island. Šime is the first to jump onto it, followed by Aca. However, they encounter crocodiles there who want to eat them, and when Aca jumps into the sea, the dream disappears, and she wakes up in her home, telling her mother what she dreamt: "To devour me they wanted to/ A gang of black men.../ It feels good now/ to have been woken up from a dream" (Blažević, 1998, p. 31). Blažević emphasizes in the punchline that children must listen to their parents, especially their mother: "Listen, that's your job,/ Your good mother!/ That's why I wrote you/ This tale." (Blažević, 1998, p. 32).

This fundamentally narrative sequence in poetic form is entirely original and unique in Croatian children's literature. It can be loosely associated with Nator's⁷ imaginative journeys around the world in "Zlatna lađa" (The Golden Boat) or "Ming Čang Lin" and others (cf. Bacalja, 2021, p. 228). The foundation of this poem carries a message of obedience, but the example provided goes beyond the didactic purpose and is particularly impressive with the humor that largely fills Blažević's writing intended for children. It is worth noting the theme of motherhood that permeates a number of poems in Blažević's children's poetry: *Na Majkin dan* (On Mother's Day), *Mojoj majki* (To My Mother), *Majka* (Mother), *Moj Majkin dan* (My Mother's Day), *Pozdrav na Majkin dan* (Greetings on Mother's Day), and others. His religious children's poems are mostly seasonal and related to Christmas time: *Advent I*, *Advent II*, *K svetome Mikuli* (To Saint Nicholas), *Božićno veselje* (Christmas Joy), *Anđeo* (Angel), *Anđeli* (Angels), *Pastiri* (Shepherds), *Sveti Tri kralji* (The Three Wise Men), *Dica Jezuševa dica pri jaslīca* (Jesus' Children at the Crib), which contains a poetic series in the form of a play, such as Cilka from Cindorf (Siegendorf), File from Filež (Nikitsch), Jandre from Jandrof (Jarovce), Priscila from Prisika (Pereszneye), Vince from Vincet (Dürnbach), and All the Children,, etc.

Regarding Blažević's children's poetry, it can be said that with his singing, in which he often used onomatopoeia and personification, he elevated it from strict pedagogical children's lyricism. He achieved a departure from traditional children's poetry within the framework of Burgenland children's literature, just as Anton Truhelka did in the 19th century when he "adapted his texts of religious songs to the level of children's world and interests, infusing them with playfulness and easily memorable rhymes" (Mihanović Salopek, 2018, p. 11). Of course, there are also poems with religious themes aimed at children, and according to Benčić, Blažević is referred to as "the first poet for school youth" (Benčić, 1995, p. 265).

3. Blažević as a children's prose writer⁸

Blažević is also a prose writer, and just like in children's poetry, he writes perhaps the most beautiful pages of children's prose in Gradišće between the two world wars. Lukežić (1995, p. 170) cites "children's stories in which he describes childlike adventures, as well as travel prose" as Blažević's

⁷ Vladimir Nator was a significant Croatian prose writer and poet from 1876 to 1949.

⁸ Cf. Bacalja, 2019, pp. 197–198.

favourite theme. The childlike imagination that Blažević finds in the subconscious of Ace Čemernjača continues in children's prose. Perhaps the most imaginative series is "Uncle Winter," which consists of several short stories from the world of children, describing their fantasies and fears. In the title story, winter is anthropomorphically depicted through the character of Uncle Winter: "Autumn rushes in winter attire. In a cap and a warm coat. Cheeks yellow as an orange, beard as thick as snow, and a cap as black as coal" (Blažević, 1996, p. 117), and this unusual man speaks about November: "Oh, children who don't know me, I have come from Siberia, where winter is eternal, where Winter has a throne and reigns, and I am his uncle. Now I have come to you to bring the autumn and this to our kingdom. Oh, children, we will see wonders along the way. We will be companions until I pass, and then you will never see me again" (Blažević, same). Of all the stories told in the winter season, perhaps the one closest to the children's world is the first one, "Let It Snow," which talks about the fear of darkness. A shadow follows the boy, and he thinks it is some terrifying creature. Fear fills his eyes, but everything disappears when he arrives home in the warmth and shelter of his house: "As I approached the village, I still hurriedly glanced behind me, to see if that big creature was still following me. A stronger fear engulfed me as I approached the house, and my follower was still right behind me" (Blažević, 1996, p. 119). Everything is resolved in the safety of home: previous fears and terrible nightmares disappear, and courage grows in the face of simple riddles of children's fears: "And as soon as I quickly turned around at the doorstep, I saw that big scarecrow, kids, that's what was so terrifying: 'I scared myself with my own shadow, as the wicked moon stretched it out in front of me.'" (Blažević, same). Blažević also incorporates local folklore and legends into his artistic texts. He brings them into "Fratrovac," the first published short story he submitted to the Calendar of the Holy Family in 1914 (cf. Benčić, 1996, p. 267), which consists of three parts: *Diboki put* (Deep Road), *Pustinac* (Hermit), and *Kloštar u lozi* (Monastery in the Vineyard).⁹

4. Blažević's translation of "The Happy Prince"

It is interesting that Ivan Blažević chooses the story "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde for his children's book. Oscar Wilde quickly established himself

⁹ According to the legend from Pereszneye, there is a place called Fratrovac where, after a chapel was built, a monastery was erected. Despite numerous dangers such as attacks from robbers, Tatars, and Turks, the monastery withstood all forces and remains standing in the same place to this day.

in literary circles, despite the difficult life circumstances primarily caused by disapproval of his lifestyle by his contemporaries. This Irish writer and poet became an extremely popular but also controversial figure during his relatively short life (he died at the age of 46) (see Ellmann, 1988; Raby, 1997; Foldy, 1997). Condemnations and accusations under British law affected his reception beyond the borders of his country¹⁰. However, despite that, his plays such as "Salome" (which was once banned in England), "The Importance of Being Earnest," and the dramatic adaptations of "The Picture of Dorian Gray" were performed throughout Europe (see Evangelista, 2010). In this context, it is interesting to note that Blažević shows interest in the short story "The Happy Prince" (or as he translates it, *Blažen kraljić*; eng. "The Blessed Little King"), published in a collection of short stories with the same title ("The Happy Prince and Other Tales") in 1888. Initially, it was not considered to provoke the moral and cultural values of the time (unlike "Salome" or "The Picture of Dorian Gray"), and therefore it gained recognition in literary circles soon after its publication (see Tatterstall, 1991). Only later, from the second half of the 20th century onwards, critics and scholars noticed similar hidden motives and messages as in his other works (see Martin, 1979; Bartle, 2012; Duan, 2022, etc.).

It is considered that the first translation of "The Happy Prince" into Croatian was done by August Harambašić in 1911¹¹, as part of a collection of Wilde's works titled "Priče" ("Stories"). This writer, translator, and lawyer, known for his political and literary activities, emphasizes Wilde's significance in the context of contemporary literature in a short preface, stating that Wilde's fate only contributed to his importance and popularity (Grubica, 2010). The translation of this well-known short story was included in another collection of Wilde's works edited by Nikola Andrić (titled "Sablast od Cantervilla" or "The Canterville Ghost") under the patronage of the publishing house *Zabavna biblioteka*, which was launched the same year as the

¹⁰ In the Austrian context, his private life may have had a more influential impact on the reception of his works than their artistic and literary value, but not as a censoring factor. On the contrary, as early as the 1890s, the francophile Vienna, as a leader of European modernism, positioned itself in opposition to the francophobic Berlin and allowed relatively unobstructed performances of the controversial "Salome" in theatrical circles (Mayer & Pfeifer, 2007).

¹¹ However, it should be noted that in his chronology of Oscar Wilde translations (including "The Happy Prince"), Luko Paljetak places the translation published by Ivan Smojver as the first, although he points out that the text lacks the year of publication (cf. Bacalja, 2023).

collection (1913). The next Croatian translation is attributed to the satirist and translator Isidor (Iso) Velikanović in 1918, in a collection titled "Mladi kralj i druge pripovijesti" ("The Young King and Other Stories"), where the term 'prince' or 'princeling' is replaced with a somewhat more serious term in the translation of the actual short story, where it is titled "Sretni vladar" ("The Happy Ruler"). The next translation of "The Happy Prince" arrives in 1955, and the role of the translator is taken by Stjepan Krešić, whose version titled "Sretni kraljević" ("The Happy Prince") is included in a collection published by the publishing house *Mladost*. After that, translations by Gregorić (1993), Paljetak (1994 and 2000), and Raos (2002) followed¹². So far, no one has addressed Ivan Blažević's translation of Wilde's short story, and therefore, with this work, we hope to introduce and present a previously unknown and chronologically one of the earliest translations of "The Happy Prince" into Croatian, and consequently into the Burgenland Croatian language.

Wilde entered the Croatian cultural and literary scene through the magazine *Mladost*, launched in Vienna in 1897, which was also the assembly point of the best Croatian students championing Croatian modernism. The magazine featured translations of foreign avant-garde works, primarily from Slavic, Scandinavian, and French authors. Another key figure in introducing Wilde to the Croatian audience was Antun Gustav Matoš, who, in a letter sent from Paris to the Zagreb newspaper *Hrvatsko pravo* in 1901, described Wilde in an extremely positive light, calling him a victim of modern hypocrisy and a rebel against social and artistic conventions (Grubica, 2010). In the 1920s and 1930s, the interest in Wilde's work in Croatian culture was not particularly significant¹³, but a few events revived it completely. Several Croatian newspapers followed and commemorated the anniversaries of Oscar Wilde's death. However, it was the performances at the Croatian National Theatre in Zagreb in 1930 and 1939 that once again reminded the Croatian audience of his work (see Grubica, 2010). In 1930, a renowned Berlin cast of actors (Max Landa, Carola Toelle, and Arthur Schröder) together with the rising star Harry Liedtke performed the play "An Ideal Husband," which was positively received by critics like Milan Begović. Equally important was the

¹² The chronological overview of previous translations into the Croatian language has been taken from the work of author Ivana Bašić (2020).

¹³ Nevenka Košutić-Brozović (1965, p. 252) states that she did not find Wilde's name in the correspondence of the editors of the magazine *Mladost*, which surprised her despite the fact that the English language and literature were not extensively represented in public at the time.

performance of "The Importance of Being Earnest" by The Gate Theatre Company from Dublin in 1939 (*ibid.*).

There is no doubt that "The Happy Prince" is among Oscar Wilde's most famous short stories, or fairy tales, so it is not surprising that Blažević chose to translate it as such. However, the context from which it comes and into which it is translated, as well as the symbolism and motifs of this short story (fairy tale), make this choice additionally intriguing. According to Monaghan (1974), "The Happy Prince" is a short story completely imbued with Christian themes. For example, the main dilemma the "swallow" has in this short story is whether to go to Egypt or stay with the prince, and the reward for staying is going to heaven. It is implied here that Wilde is sending a message that choosing selfless behaviour over selfishness, where going to Egypt represents behaviour that aims solely to satisfy one's (the swallow's) own needs and desires. The swallow's choice to stay with the happy prince symbolizes its acceptance of Christian ethics (Monaghan, 1974). In addition, symbolism as a stylistic device can be recognized in key motifs. In the dictionary of mythology, folklore, and symbols (Jobes, 1961), it is mentioned that the prince traditionally symbolizes Christ, the swallow is an incarnation of Christ, gold symbolizes the divine spirit, sapphire represents the Virgin Mary, and ruby represents divine love.

The first aspect of Blažević's translation that immediately stands out is the translation of the short story's title. He chooses a completely different translation from the usual "The Happy Prince", adding a spiritual connotation to the title – "The Blessed Little King." By avoiding the irony of the adjective "happy" in the title, a much more important element of the story is emphasized, an element that is crucial to the philosophy of Christian ethics and likely chosen by this priest and writer for that reason. According to Christian ethics, "happiness" is not the ideal to strive for, at least not in the sense of uncompromising and unscrupulous pursuit of it. On the contrary, the idea of self-sacrifice for the benefit of others is considered the noblest and likely occupies the first place on the scale of morality in Christian ethics (this is particularly evident in the New Testament, where Christ's sacrifice is interpreted as the ultimate symbol of self-sacrifice for the benefit of humanity). Therefore, given the already observed parallels between the prince and Christ (see Griswold, 1974; Thoma, 2013; Humaish, 2017; Kirvalidze & Samnidze, 2018, etc.), as well as the aforementioned symbolism, it is not surprising that Blažević chooses this particular translation, simultaneously emphasizing the Christian symbolism and moral weight of this short story.

A summary of interesting choices in Ivan Blažević's translation for some key terms is presented in Table 1. For example, Ivana Bašić (2020) evaluated the gender choices in the translations of the words "Swallow" (Croatian: Lastavić) and "Reed" (Croatian: Trska) in previous translations of Oscar Wilde's works into Croatian. Of course, Blažević's translation here also proves to be different from the previously mentioned and studied ones – "Sulica" is a unique translation so far, while the Croatian term for the female swallow has been used in Harambašić's (1911) and Velikanović's (1918) translations. However, more interesting are the religious and regional motifs in Ivan Blažević's translation choices: (1) instead of "river," Blažević uses the term "Dubanjak," which is actually the Dubanjak pond in his native Frankenau in Austria, located on the border with Hungary, (2) instead of "Palace of Sans-Souci," Blažević opts for the term *Vrt veselja* (Garden of Delight), once again a traditional Christian motif and a reference to the "Garden of Eden," (3) the term and motif of "homeland" are also used several times in the translation, and when juxtaposed with the more literal translation – such as "house," it is possible that Blažević is trying to appeal to stronger emotions in the reader.

A review of interesting choices in Ivan Blažević's translations for some key terms is shown in Table 1. For example, Ivana Bašić (2020) evaluated gender choices in the translations of the words "Swallow" (Croatian: "Lastavić") and "Reed" (Croatian: "Trska") in previous translations of Oscar Wilde's works into Croatian. Naturally, Blažević's translation here also differs from the previously mentioned and studied ones. "Sulica" is a unique translation so far, while "Lastavica" has already been used in Harambašić's (1911) and Velikanović's (1918) translations. However, more interesting are the religious and regional motifs in Ivan Blažević's translation choices: (1) Instead of "rijeka" (river), Blažević uses the term "Dubanjak,"¹⁴ which is actually a pond called Dubanjak in his native Frankenau in Austria, right on the border with Hungary; (2) Instead of "Palača San-Souci" (San-Souci Palace), Blažević opts for "Vrt veselja" (Garden of Joy), once again appealing to a traditional Christian motif and a symbol of the paradise; (3) The terms and motifs

¹⁴ In his short story "Sastanak kod ribnjaka" (Meeting by the Pond), Anton Leopold, also a Burgenland Croatian writer (originally from Frankenau, like Ivan Blažević), emphasizes: "I couldn't find peace before Sunday mass without taking a little detour to Dubanjak, our small lake and pond, which lay by the road and close to our garden. At that time, they hadn't yet made all those strict laws and regulations for nature. It wasn't prohibited to fish in the village ponds like this. And in our Dubanjak pond, there used to be an abundance of fish." (Leopold, 1989, p. 11)

of “homeland” are also used several times in the translation¹⁵, and when compared to the more literal translation “kuća” (house), it’s possible that Blažević is trying to appeal to stronger emotions in the reader.

Table 1. Overview of translation choices in the compared renditions

| Source text Oscar Wilde | Translation by Luko Paljetak (2002.) | Translation by Ivan Blažević (1930ih) |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Happy Prince | <i>Sretni princ</i> (Happy Prince) | <i>Blažen kraljić</i> (Blessed Little King) |
| Swallow | <i>Lastavić</i> (male swallow) | <i>Lastavica</i> (female swallow) |
| Reed | <i>Trska</i> (reed) | <i>Sulica</i> (arrowhead-like plant) |
| river | <i>Rijeka</i> (river) | <i>Dubanjk(a)</i> (a name for a local pond) |
| Palace of Sans Souci, | <i>Palača San-Souci</i> (San-Souci Palace) | <i>Vrt veselja</i> (Garden of Delight) |
| House of Death | <i>Kuća Smrti</i> (House of Death) | <i>domovina smrti</i> (Homeland of Death) |

In his translation, Blažević intentionally omits certain parts of the short story; many segments have been condensed in the translation, but the key passages and events are fully retained. However, it should be noted that he leaves out minor digressions that are not critically important to the narrative. For example, in Paljetak’s (2002) translation and the original text, we find segments like the following, which are entirely omitted from Blažević’s translation:

- (1) “What a remarkable phenomenon,” said the Professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. “A swallow in winter!” And he wrote

¹⁵ It’s interesting to note that his predecessor, Mate Meršić Miloradić, who was a key figure in the Croatian cultural and literary revival in western Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century, played a significant role when he published a translation of Pushkin’s “The Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish” in the “Kalendar sv. Familije” (Calendar of the Holy Family), which was published in Győr from 1903 to 1919 (and was actually initiated by Meršić Miloradić himself). In his translation, he added local and national characteristics.

So, Pushkin’s golden fish speaks Croatian:

“I told her everything from the start,

She listens in wonder, doesn’t interrupt:

I caught a fish, it was strange, you see,

In Croatian, it spoke quite beautifully.” (Meršić Miloradić, 1978, p. 404)

a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand.¹⁶

- (2) He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch gold-fish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

Blažević's translation is entirely focused on conveying Wilde's message to the readers, so it is not surprising that he "ignores" some passages in the translation that do not carry weight in the context of the story's instructive nature. What is much more interesting are the segments he proactively adds to the translation, which do not appear in the original text. Such additions are often inspired by religious motifs (Table 2) or motifs related to the nation and homeland (Table 3).

Table 2. Religion-related motifs introduced by Blažević

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oscar Wilde | "Thank you, little Swallow," said the Prince. |
| Luko Paljetak | „Hvala ti, mali Lastaviću“ – reče princ. |
| Ivan Blažević | „Hvalim, mila lastavica, Bog ti neka da sriću do Egipta.“, which literally translates to: "Thank you, dear swallow, may God grant you happiness all the way to Egypt." |

¹⁶ Paljetak's Croatian translation (2002):

- (1) *Kakva neobična pojava – reče Profesor ornitologije prolazeći mostom. – Lastavica usred zime! I napisa o tome dugački članak za lokalni list. Svatko ga je citirao, bio je prepun nekih izraza koje ljudi nisu mogli razumjeti.*
- (2) *Pripovijedao mu je o crvenim ibisima koji u dugim nizovima stoje na obalama i u kljun hvataju zlatne ribe; o Sfingi koja je stara koliko i svijet i živi u pustinji i zna sve; o trgovcima koji polako idu pokraj svojih deva i u ruci nose brojanice od jantara; o Kralju Mjesečevih planina koji je crn kao ebanovina i klanja se golemom kristalu; o velikoj zelenoj zmiji koja spava na palmi i ima dvadeset svećenika koji je hrane medenjacima; i o patuljcima koji po velikom jezeru plove na širokim plosnatim listovima i neprestano ratuju s leptirima.*

In Table 3, a segment is shown that appears in Blažević's translation but is absent in the original text or other translations. In this segment, Blažević adds a personal touch, emphasizing the importance of one's homeland to a person and how one should be happy to have one (let alone two).

Table 3. Homeland-related motifs introduced by Blažević

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Oscar Wilde | Then, when the autumn came, they all flew away. |
| Luko Paljetak | <i>Zatim, kada je došla jesen, sve lastavice poletješe.</i> |
| Ivan Blažević | <i>Kol se je jesen približavala su prošle lastavice u topliju domovinu, ar one su tako srićne, da imaju dvi teple domovine, a mi nek jednu pak mnogi nek svenek mrzlu!</i> which literally translates to: "As autumn was approaching, the swallows have left for a warmer homeland, and they are so fortunate to have two warm homelands, while we have just one, while many endure the cold one!" |

Conclusion

Ivan Blažević's entire children's literature, as we indicated in the paper, has the features of a careful selection of topics that, in the style of traditional Croatian children's poetry, provide examples from which one can draw lessons on good behaviour. He also provided imaginative verses about Aca Čemernjača and Šima, in which the old instructive act is presented in a new form (as well as in short prose, e.g., in "Uncle Winter") and intertwined with humour, whereas his verses aim to deliver a lesson with an emphasized moral tendency and religious message (poems *Advent I*, *Advent II*, *To St. Nicholas*, etc.).

By examining his literary work, we gain insight into the socio-educational context of the time and place. Although it is a geographically smaller community in which his work has left a significant literary mark, there is no doubt that the themes Blažević addressed reflected issues that were important to the Croatian diaspora at the time. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the primary target audience were children, with a focus on moral messages of universal significance, while simultaneously, the framework of national and religious values extended as a secondary, more subtle literary tool recognized by a somewhat more mature readership.

Until now, nobody has discussed Ivan Blažević's rendition of the Wilde's short story. In this paper, we aim to bring to light and make known one of the earliest translations of "The Happy Prince" into Croatian, and subsequently, into the Burgenland Croatian language. Blažević seems to

have deliberately chosen the Happy Prince as a short story to present to the Burgenland Croatian public, both adult and children. In his translation, religious motives are clearly emphasized, to the extent that he sometimes introduces them himself. The secondary characteristic manifested in his translation is likely related to the situation of Croats in the Austrian province of Burgenland, so occasional regional-national references or less common translator's choices in translating certain terms are not surprising. However, it is important to note that the translation remains faithful to the original text and that the most important moral and value layers of this short story are undoubtedly conveyed to the readers of that time.

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Abstrakt: Text se zabývá různými aspekty literární tvorby kněze Ivana Blaževiče (Frankenau, 1888 – Szombathely, 1946), který byl autorem textů pro dospělé i pro děti a v literární historii si vysloužil titul „prvního básníka pro školní mládež“ (Benčić, 1995, s. 265). V kontextu germánské, maďarské, slovenské a české kultury vznikla literární tradice u větve Chorvatů, kteří se od 16. století usadili ve své nové vlasti, především v západní části Uher. Kulturní činnost vzkvétala na počátku 20. století, kdy byl kladen velký důraz na chorvatský jazyk a kulturu jako nedílné znaky identity; ty byly vnímány jako zásadní při utváření hodnot v rodinném a školním prostředí, se zvláštním důrazem na děti jako primární publikum. Kromě příspěvků k dětské poezii se Blaževičovy literární zájmy rozšířily i na dětskou prózu a překlady. Za zmínku stojí jeho poutavý překlad Šťastného prince Oscara Wildea do burgenlandské chorvatštiny, který nebyl v chorvatské literární historii dosud znám. Zkoumáním jeho literárního díla příspěvek umožňuje nahlédnout do společensko-vzdělávacího kontextu doby a místa a do poselství, která byla tehdejšími kulturními předáky považována za dostatečně důležitá a akcentovaná.

Klíčová slova: Ivan Blaževič, dětská poezie, diaspora, burgenlandská chorvatština, Malostranské a školní noviny.

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